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Letter dated 26 February 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the twenty-ninth monthly report of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present letter covers the period from 23 January to 22 February 2016.

With respect to the destruction of the chemical weapons production facilities, one hangar has yet to be destroyed, as the prevailing security situation prevents access to this hangar. I take note of the note by the Director General to the OPCW Executive Council (see enclosure), in which he indicated that the locations of two other stationary above-ground facilities remained outside the control of the Syrian Government.

As at the end of this reporting period, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team had completed 14 visits to the Syrian Arab Republic. I take note of the reference by the Director General, in his note to the Executive Council, of the ongoing fifteenth visit of the Team to meet with Syrian authorities in Beirut and to retrieve samples.

I recall that the OPCW Director General will be reporting to the OPCW Executive Council before its eighty-first session, in March 2016, on the details of all unresolved issues, in particular those on which no further progress has been made. In this regard, I note that the Director General has issued a report, which will be taken up by the Executive Council at its next session. I reiterate my call for continuing cooperation between the Syrian authorities and OPCW, which is a requirement for further progress.

The OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic has completed its latest mission, aimed at further understanding the circumstances under which certain blood samples taken during its work showed the presence of sarin or a sarin-like substance. I understand that the information and data collected in the course of this further investigation are currently being examined by the fact-finding mission.

In relation to the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, further to its report of 12 February 2016 (S/2016/142), I have been informed by the Head of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, and have the honour to inform the members of the Security Council, that they will be focusing on the following cases during phase II of their investigation that starts on 1 March 2016 (in chronological order):

Please recycle

- Kafr Zita, Hama Governorate, 10, 11 and 18 April 2014
- Al-Tamanah, Idlib Governerate, 29 and 30 April and 25 and 26 May 2014
- Talmenes, Idlib Governorate, 21 April 2014
- Qmenas, Idlib Governorate, 16 March 2015
- Sarmin, Idlib Governorate, 16 March 2015
- Binnish, Idlib Governorate, 23 and 24 March 2015
- Marea, Aleppo Governorate, 21 August 2015

I urge all members to support the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, in particular by providing or giving access to information on the cases referred to above.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme" prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council. My report covers the period from 23 January to 22 February 2016 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2 (f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, also adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015).

4. This, the twenty-ninth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions, and includes information relevant to the period from 23 January to 22 February 2016.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

5. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) As reported previously, significant progress has been made with the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 24, and three remain to be verified as destroyed. In summary, of the 12 robustly constructed CWPFs (five underground structures and seven reinforced aircraft hangars), only one hangar remains to be destroyed. The Secretariat has also verified the destruction of eight mobile units and five stationary above-ground facilities. Within the reporting period, the security situation continued to preclude safe access to the aforementioned hangar to be destroyed. Also, as the locations of two other stationary above-ground facilities remain outside the control of the Syrian Government, their condition cannot be confirmed at this time.

(b) On 16 February 2016, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its twenty-seventh monthly report (EC-81/P/NAT.5, dated 15 February 2016)

regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

(c) The Syrian authorities have continued to extend the necessary cooperation in accordance with the implementation of subparagraph 1 (e) of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

6. As reported previously, all the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

7. The Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services continued their cooperation in the context of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. Seven OPCW staff members were deployed as part of that mission as at the cut-off date of this report (this includes the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT)).

8. The Director General has continued to communicate with senior officials of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

9. The Secretariat and the Syrian authorities have maintained their ongoing cooperation on outstanding issues regarding the Syrian initial declaration, as encouraged by the Council at its Seventy-Sixth Session (paragraph 6.17 of EC-76/6, dated 11 July 2014). Further, and as requested by the Council at its Eightieth Session (paragraph 7.19 of EC-80/4*, dated 8 October 2015), efforts to resolve the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies with the declaration have been expedited, as the DAT has conducted four visits to the Syrian Arab Republic since that session.

10. As previously reported, the DAT began its fourteenth visit on 18 January 2016 and had, at the beginning of the visit, discussed the provisional analytical results of the samples taken during its eleventh and twelfth visits with Syrian authorities. In the latter part of the DAT's fourteenth visit, which ended on 26 January 2016, the aforementioned sample results were discussed further, and new samples were taken at two of three sites visited by the DAT. The DAT began its fifteenth visit on 20 February to conduct a meeting with the Syrian authorities held in Beirut, and to bring the newly taken samples back to OPCW designated laboratories. The fifteenth visit is expected to end on 25 February 2016.

11. In accordance with the Council's request at its Eightieth Session in October 2015 that the Director General report to it, before its Eighty-First Session (in March 2016), the details of all unresolved issues, in particular those for which no further progress can be made, the Director General issued a report entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/HP/DG.1, dated 22 February 2016), which will be taken up by the Council at its Eighty-First Session.

Supplementary resources

12. As at the cut-off date of this report, the Trust Fund for Syria Missions, which was established in November 2015 to support the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT, had a balance of EUR 3.1 million. Contribution agreements have been concluded with Finland, France, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and the European Union. Pledges from other donors have been made and are currently being processed.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

13. The FFM has completed its latest mission. This mission, as reported earlier, was focused on the incidence of discovery of sarin or a sarin-like substance in certain blood samples. The focus of the enquiry is to seek to gain a better understanding of the circumstances under which such exposure might have occurred. The information and data collected are currently being examined.

14. The Head of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, through a letter addressed to the Director General dated 16 February 2016, provided the first report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and requested that the OPCW Executive Council be informed. The report was submitted to the United Nations Security Council on 12 February 2016 pursuant to resolution 2235 (2015) and has since been made available to the OPCW Executive Council in accordance with paragraph 11 of that resolution.

Conclusion

15. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the DAT and FFM activities, as well as the destruction and verification of the remaining aircraft hangar and confirmation of the status of the two stationary above-ground facilities currently outside the control of the Syrian Government.